

for legislative recognition of direction and management as distinct though complementary functions of the board and the executive respectively, through appropriate grouping of provisions.

- Highlighting directorial commitment and accountability through fewer and more focused board and committee memberships, tighter delineation of independence criteria and minimization of interest-conflict potential.
- Suggesting application of corporate governance principles to Public Sector Undertakings, certainly in case of Listed Companies, and preferably even in case of Unlisted Companies, in terms of freeing them from multiple surveillance agencies and upgrading their boards with independent directors.

(c) and (d) The Report of the Study Group has been examined by the Government and matter relating to implementing important recommendations of the Group is under active consideration of the Government.

(e) and (f) One of the important recommendations made by the Study Group is to set up, under the aegis of Department of Company Affairs, an Independent, Autonomous Centre for Corporate Excellence to mainly accord accreditation and promote policy research and studies, training & education and awards etc. in the field of corporate excellence through improved corporate governance. The matter is under active consideration of the Government.

Backlog in Courts

2445. SHRI P. PRABHAKAR REDDY: Will the Minister of LAW, JUSTICE AND COMPANY AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether his attention has been drawn to the news-item, "Courts have backlog of 2.4 crore cases" published in the Hindustan Times, dated 11th December, 2000;

(b) if so, his reaction thereto;

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(c) whether it is a fact that Eleventh Finance Commission made some specific proposals for quick disposal of pending court cases;

(d) if so, details thereof and Government's decision thereto; and

(e) what steps are contemplated by Government to ensure speedy justice to the people?

THE MINISTER OF LAW, JUSTICE AND COMPANY AFFAIRS (SHRI ARUN JAITLEY): (a) and (b) Yes, Sir.

There were 21,936 cases pending in the Supreme Court as on 1.2.2001, 34.33 lakh cases pending in the High Courts as on 30.6.2000 and 2.02 crore cases pending in the Subordinate Courts as on 31.12.1998.

Both Government and judiciary are concerned with mounting backlog of cases.

(c) and (d) On the specific recommendation of the Eleventh Finance Commission, the Central Government have decided to set up 1734 additional courts in the country in the Subordinate Judiciary. These courts are expected to serve as fast track courts, and dispose of, on priority, long pending sessions cases, and other criminal cases involving undertrials in jails.

The scheme includes construction of new court rooms, appointment of adhoc judges and other supporting staff, arrangements for public prosecutors in these courts, arrangements for quick process service etc. These courts are expected to start working with effect from 1.4.2001 and will continue till 31.3.2005. Central Government have sanctioned a grant of Rs. 502.90 crore for this scheme. Out of this, an allocation of Rs. 202.27 crore has been made for the current year, 2000-01.

(e) Various steps have been contemplated by the Government to ensure speedy justice to the people. These include increase in the number of posts of Judges/Judicial Officers, amendment in procedural laws, establishment of Special Courts/Tribunals, appointment of Special Judicial/Metropolitan Magistrates, computerisation of courts and adoption of alternative modes of dispute resolution, such as,

arbitration and conciliation. Lok Adalats have been given a statutory base as supplementary forum for resolution of disputes.

A pilot project for the computerisation and networking of all courts in the four metropolitan cities of Delhi, Mumbai, Kolkata & Chennai is being taken up in the year 2001-2002 to serve as a model for other courts in the country. Computerisation and networking of courts will augment the capacities of courts in the country and speed up disposal of cases.

Legal Aid to Poor

2446. SHRI SURESH PACHOURI: Will the Minister of LAW, JUSTICE AND COMPANY AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) the present state of affairs in so far as legal aid to poor is concerned;

(b) whether Government have any special scheme to provide speedy legal aid to tribals in the country; and

(c) if so, details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF LAW, JUSTICE AND COMPANY AFFAIRS (SHRI ARUN JAITLEY): (a) Free and competent Legal Services to the weaker section of the society is provided in accordance with provisions of Legal Services Authorities Act, 1987. The Central Government has constituted National Legal Services Authority (NALSA) which is also called the Central Authority. The Central Authority organizes legal aid camps, especially in rural areas, slums, or labour colonies with the dual purpose of educating the weaker sections of the society as to their rights as well as encouraging the settlement of disputes through Lok Adalat. The Central Authority has also constituted the Supreme Court Legal Services Committee.

(b) and (c) In terms of Section 12 of the Legal Services Authorities Act, 1987 a member of Scheduled Tribe is entitled to legal services under the said Act. These legal services are available through Taluk Legal Services Committees, District Legal Services Authorities, State Legal Services Authorities, High Court Legal Services Committees and Supreme Court Legal Services Committee.